

Interviewee(s): Ormiston Group (OG)	Interviewer(s): Unknown (UN)
Date of Interview: Unknown	Ref: EL2-28-1-1-T
REGION	East Lothian
TOWN/VILLAGE	Ormiston

Running time: 00.16.19

00.00

UN: Do you think they have too much laid on for them?

OG1: Oh [unclear] they think they havenae got but they still think they have with mair money to spend and, which I think is quite alright. Because when I was a laddie, I never had nae scent o' a penny or nothing.

OG2: The younger generation is being spoilt because they get things too easy. In our days you, I got my older; for instance, now when it came the month o' April, when I was a boy at school, my boots were taken away from us and I run wi' my bare feet all summer. But then when it came near the winter again I didnae get my boots back I got my elder brother's boots back.

OG1: When it was handed doon aye, oh that's right.

OG2: I'm, I'm no' exaggerating.

OG1: Ah-ha.

OG2: Aye, that's how things, that's how tight things were in those days.

OG3: Aye they ca'd them hand, hand-me-doons.

UN: Yes.

OG1: [Unclear] I mean the, the, the weather must've been better because we ran aboot wi' our bare feet fae Easter right on tae aboot September anyways. You never had any [unclear].

OG3: Women, women in these days was more thrifty because they had to be more thrifty. The family was normally seven. They kept the claes that came off the older ones to suit the younger ones and they bought new yins for the older ones, and they kept comin' doon [unclear].

OG1: The reason was because they had no [unclear].

OG3: It was necessity that made them dae that.

OG1: They had nae money tae buy new clothes.

OG3: Nowadays they didnae nee to dae that.

UN: No.

OG3: They're buying £100 presents for their Christmas, bicycles and a' for Christmas.

OG1: Nae need to wash claes [unclear].

OG3: The first bicycle I got I had to pay two and sixpence (two shillings and sixpence) a week.

- OG1: They had tae patch them up and in they days [unclear] and they had nae electricity.
- OG3: Fifty shillings that was what it cost to go tae my work. Well, I was tellin' yae the first bike I got was Bisset & Stedman's at Tranent, I had tae go tae my work, a Sun Club. And that's my pocket money when I started workin' first was two and sixpence a week and I had tae spend the whole two and sixpence on that bike. It was paid up, [00.02] £2.50 Bisset & Stedman's in Tranent. Noo their buying £50, £60 and £70 bikes for their bairns for their Christmas. And the men that had bikes then has cars noo.
- UN: Yes.
- OG3: Which, which goes to prove that times has improved. I mean, when, when I'm saying that long ago it was too bad, but I think it's got too much the other way noo.
- OG2: Yes, I second that.
- OG1: Aye.
- UN: What about the women?
- OG3: Well, the women what.
- UN: What did they do, did they have any spare time?
- OG3: The women, women now has more spare time than whit they had long ago when they had the pit claes tae dae at night, they had dinners to make through the day, the hoose tae clean through the day, the washin' tae dae through the day, dinners to make for their men comin' hame, when their men came hame they had a' these pit claes to hing oot on the, the fence or the rope whatever it may be and scrape moleskin, scrape pit bits (boots), brush them. On a Monday mornin' they always came oot wi' their, their bits, their bits black leaded, ye ken. Boot polish on their bits on a, a Monday mornin' but that was all ye got. Through the week they were only scraped and dried.
- OG1: Plus, electric cookers now, I mean, the women then there were no cookers or nothing ye had tae keep the fire on, they had to cook everything on the fire. Bile water, there were no water inside, or no hot or cold water they had tae have the fire on. No electric cookers or switch on in the mornin' they had the, they had tae get up and put the kettle on a fire and kindle your fire if it was oot and before ye went to the pit or where, wherever ye worked at. They had tae do that therefor now it's comin' put the cooker on and make the toast or.
- OG3: And, and the women in these days it was a 24-hour day. For my mother it was, my mother died when she was 51 years of age after bringing up a family o' 11. The youngest was 14 when she died, 12, excuse me 12 [00.04] when she died, Jean. And my mother was worked 24 hours a day and that's what I believe killed my mother the day. And that was doin' her aine paintin' and decoratin', papering because you couldnae afford tae.
- UN: Yes.
- OG3: Bring in paperers and decorators and I think everybody was about the same at that time. I don't.
- OG2: Oh yes everyone done their own decorating in these days; if a neighbour couldnae dae it some o' the neighbours would come and do it for them. They got a cuppa tea after the job was done, but they all helped one another.

UN: Did the women ever have anything to do with the dogs or the pigeons?

OG4: No, no.

OG1: Oh no.

OG4: It was, it was a funny thing if you seen a woman, a woman in a loft.

OG1: They had plenty tae dae cookin' and lookin' after the hoose.

OG2: Although I can tell you this much, I can remember when my wife she, she used to scrub out my pigeon loft maybe once a fortnight. I always kept it scrapped out and clean, but if it was needing a scrub out, she would go and do it. And she was, well my wife was always in, in big houses in service at, at Saltoun Hall up there and these places they used to serve. But all the girls had to go to these sort o' places in these days. There were no, no work for them unless round about Ormiston I believe there was some field work.

OG1: Aye lots of field workers Bill.

OG3: Aye.

OG2: But where I was there was no field work for women. So, they had to go tae; all my sisters, whenever they were 15 years of age, left the school at maybe 14, but when they were 15, they were packed away to service. And in those days, you didnae go wi' a suitcase you went wi' one o' them big trunks aye, you know, big wooden trunks.

OG1: Aye a big kist, what they cried a kist. [00.06]

OG2: What they cried a kist and they had them and you had to hire a cab to take this kist to the station. And then at the other end you had to hire a cad again to get wherever you where goin'. It was tough work, but I don't know there was far more contentment then than what there is now-a-days I can assure you.

OG1: Oh aye, much more.

UN: That's true.

OG1: Much more contentment, aye.

OG3: See, women, women it proves itsel the amount o' women that's workin' the day and what was workin' then. A woman: there were no fridges, there were no cookers, a women had to go every day for her messages. Where she had a family, she had to go doon to the butchers for her beef or messages. Where they had a big family like oors we used; McNeil the Grocer was the grocer in the village at the time and my mother, he used to know what send up to my mother every day and it just came up every day and she paid it, her bill at the weekend. Now, over and above that they had dinners to watch, they had clothes to wash, by the time they got a' this done the miners was, their sons and their man was in frae their work.

UN: Yeah.

OG3: They had tae a' this dinner to make, their dishes to wash and then they had a' the pit claes. Now, they had a' the peeces to make up for the next mornin', peece boxes and flasks to put out fill wi' sugar and milk. Make up six slice o' bread for each yin that's goin' oot, six sandwiches for each one that's goin' out. So, there werenae much chance o' them workin'.

Now, they've got a fridge they can buy meat in for a month if they want, deep freeze. They've got cookers, they've got washin' machines so they can dae their work in half the time, less than half the time so they've got more leisure time. That's why women can work the day, go to bingo halls, go to clubs.

OG1: If a women was seen goin' into a pub in they days they were ooooh [00.08] they were mud, that's right Bob?

OG2: Yes ah-ha.

OG1: You never seen a woman in a pub in my young day.

OG2: They were severely looked down on.

OG1: They were looked down on if a women went into a pub or [unclear] anything.

OG4: You know that's cos publicans have improved since these days.

OG1: No, no that's right though George, it may be.

OG2: Well publicans have improved since these days George now, but still whit Jonny says is still true.

OG1: Aye.

OG3: Aye.

OG1: [Unclear] company for old women may be about Duncan's there, ye ken for a gill for them, but they werenae goin' intae a pub, nah; never seen a woman in a pub, no.

OG3: There were an old midwife in oor village, and she brought a' the bairns in the village into the world. You sent for a doctor, and he left the midwife; old Lisa Conner they ca'd her. And she had key for her doors she was, she also kept a wee shop, a wee sweetie shop, and this key was, it was like chromium, see it never left her hand passed she was goin' to dae something she put it doon and she'd always have this key. And, when we were was laddies, we used to go doon to the shop windae and she used to like her, her wee tippie, you see, and we had to run two mile frae Blackrig (Blackridge) tae, frae Westrigg to Blackrig to Jimmy Chains pub for his gill o' whisky in a paper poke, you see. And she guid you two shillings, it was two shillings a gill and when you went to Jimmy Chains, they geed you a wee poke o' pan drops and you got threepence frae Lisa, frae, frae Lisa Conner when you came back.

OG1: Yeah, yeah.

OG3: For goin' for a gill. Now she turned that gill o' whisky into a bowl wi' hot water and sugar and maybe twice a day she had that. And that was the old woman that brought a' the bairns, the bairns a' ca'd her Granny Conner. And she, she was drowned in the Barbauchlaw Burn in Blackrig; she was goin' across to a confinement in a place ca'd Westcraigs and she had slipped off the bridge went over for a short cut. And she was missing for three days [00.10] and it was my father that found her. He was goin' across to my aunties in Westcraigs; they ca'd this wee place, this place wee Moscow because there was a lot o' communists livin' in it and they ca'd it wee Moscow. And he.

OG1: Little Moscow?

- OG3: Aye, he was, he was crossin' the brig when he seen; she wore a black apron and she had always a black shawl and black was all, she always wore black, and it was always boots they like they button boots she wore. And he seen the, the black thing flappin' in the water as the water went doon and that was where he found this Lisa Conner and that was the woman that brought aye 90% o' the, the bairns in these days intae the world.
- UN: John can we bring.
- OG5: Yes.
- UN: The story a wee bit more up to date about what you feel about community life, leisure life, have, have things changed dramatically from the stories we've been hearing?
- OG5: Must've done, they must've done cos, I mean, I, I can remember my mother telling me when she was living, when she was 14 she worked in the pithead at Carberry Pit on the tables picking rocks oot the coal. And that was before she went to service in big houses and well I mean, once she got older and married, I mean, that was her settled down with her family she never worked again like, but. I cannae imagine a 14-year-old nowadays going picking rocks oot a coal on a pithead at, especially a woman anyhow at 14, but there was nothing else for them. Because that's, that was their life and my grandmother she worked in service at Carberry House and my, I think my grandfather was the gardener or something like that there. So, I mean, it must've changed dramatically when, I mean, nowadays [00.12] you can jump in a car and go to Asda and spend a fortune on messages every week whereas they had maybe about five bob (five shillings) to feed maybe seven or eight o' a family or something like that. Whereas you can go and spend £50 in Asda and it's away in two days. So, it, it must've really changed dramatically, I mean, even nowadays there's nobody or very rarely you see a man and wife wi' any more than two children nowadays or three at the most whereas these gentlemen here are talking about coming from families o' 11 and all the rest o' it. I come from a big family mysell but, I mean, my, my father would've been 81 this year my mother would've been 80 I was the youngest but, I mean, that was; you never hear o' these things nowadays big families like that. And I think things have, have changed dramatically.
- OG1: The man haed nothing else tae dae in they days John, but eh?
- OG6: [Unclear] sold that I think.
- OG3: Nae televisions, nae televisions.
- OG5: I think families were a lot happier then.
- OG1: Aye I think we were all happier then.
- OG2: Oh, we were happier. There were big family, there were more big families then than what there is now. Now, well a, a big family was always a happy family. You made your own fun.
- OG1: Aye they had singing, played games at night and they had singsongs among yersells and.
- OG2: And your own amusements you had to do it.
- OG1: Aye.
- OG2: And even in isolated villages there were always a little fun goin' on, you made your a concert just among themselves.

- OG1: Aye.
- OG2: And they usually got, surprisingly, some o' them very good singers and turns. There's none o' that nowadays. The education is a very good thing, but the people are so enlightened nowadays that they, they want everything for nothing [00.14] there no' goin' to work for it, let us put it that way.
- OG1: We were happy anyway Bob I would think. [Unclear] nothing in [unclear].
- OG5: I would agree, I would agree with that because it's just like I; well, I started work at 15 but I'd never been in Straiton until I went to the pits. I'd done my apprenticeship and I, the first strike I was in was 1972, big strike. And the community spirit in Ormiston then even reflected I would say back to the old times because everybody clubbed in, everybody helped each other if they could. And the miners, although they werenae getting coal, they went oot and they sawed logs and all the rest o' it for the old-aged pensioners cos, obviously, no pit coal coming up the pits. People werenae getting coal delivered and the miners in Ormiston done a great job I thought in goin' and cutting wood and delivering it to the old folks. And, I mean, that, that was a reflection o' the old mining spirit, but I, I think it's so going out the window now because it's just money everybody wants more and more money.
- UN: To do what with it do you think?
- OG5: Have a better social life, go holidays tae Majorca, Spain every year, certainly every year whatever.
- OG1: But all the mining villages, the.
- OG5: I believe that.
- OG1: The old mining villages, you know, well, they weren't, there were nae saints, there weren't many saints. Well, there were tattie fields and ye used to go and steal tatties at sometimes, well we helped oursel. And if we went in, if we went in daylight you werenae stealing, if you went in the dark you were stealing. But if there were somebody near hand and they were hard up and they needed a boilin' o' tatties well; Elphinstone especially, that was a village up there, and by God they were never, naebody went hungry if they needed they would steal tatties and hand the bag intae their next door neighbour, even handed them intae the policeman [00.16] the policeman used to say Donald the policeman McDonald used to say "Well I'll no' be on duty tonight" and they used tae "Mind and leave a bag at my door tae" and they used tae do that. A' the, a' the miners in they wee villages a' helped each other oot wi' tatties or, they never went hungry, that's right Bob?

[00.16.19]